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TAGS: PGOV MARR KDEM IV

SUBJECT: FPI BLOCKING OUAGA IV TO DELAY ELECTIONS?

REF: ABIDJAN 220

Classified By: PolEcon Chief Silvia Eiriz for reasons 1.4 (b/d)

¶11. (C) Summary. Alain Lobognon, the Prime Minister's Communications Advisor, told Ambassador he believes President Gbagbo's camp is blocking implementation of the fourth supplementary agreement (Ouaga IV) to the Ouagadougou Political Agreement (OPA) in order to delay elections because they fear a Gbagbo electoral defeat. Lobognon said all Forces Nouvelles (FAFN) zone commanders (comzones) are willing to relinquish their command roles. He stated the comzones will be attached to the FAFN general staff and will train the FAFN soldiers who have volunteered to join the new national army. End Summary.

Fate of the Comzones

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¶12. (C) Lobognon, who heads the Prime Minister's delegation to meetings of the OPA's Evaluation and Monitoring Committee (CEA), told Ambassador on April 2 that the FAFN divided the national territory under their control into ten zones and placed a commander in charge of each zone. When transfer of power from the comzones to the prefects takes place, the zones and the comzones' responsibility for administering them, disappear. Affoussy Bamba, legal advisor to the Prime Minister, told Poloff on March 31 that the comzones will be attached to the FAFN general staff (see reftel). Lobognon confirmed this and added that they will be charged with training the 5,000 FAFN soldiers who have volunteered to join the national army and will be stationed in the interim at four regroupment centers located in Bouake, Korhogo, Man, and Seguela. Lobognon assured Ambassador that all the comzones are on board with this plan.

¶13. (C) Lobognon said the Integrated Command Center (ICC) will be in charge of security once the comzones step down. He agreed with Ambassador, however, that the ICC exists only on paper. He accused the national army (FANCI) of impeding the ICC from becoming a viable entity because of internal rivalries regarding the fact that the ICC is headed by an officer from the gendarmerie rather than from the army. Lobognon said the FAFN have told Gbagbo he needs to ensure the ICC gets up and running.

Blocking Ouaga IV To Delay Elections

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¶14. (C) Lobognon is convinced that members of President Gbagbo's camp are blocking implementation of Ouaga IV as a tactic to delay the presidential election because they are afraid Gbagbo would lose if an election were held in the near future. He said the Prime Minister drafted a timeline in January that gave the Ministry of Defense the lead on several key issues including drafting the decrees needed to implement Ouaga IV. He noted that the Ministry of Defense must transmit to President Gbagbo for signature the decrees regarding comzones' ranks and pensions provided for by Ouaga IV. The Ministry of Defense has not transmitted the decrees, Lobognon said, and the President has not requested that they be sent to him. So, the process is stalled. Lobognon told Ambassador that the FAFN will not re-negotiate Ouaga IV and that there will be no Ouaga V.

¶15. (C) Lobognon said the FAFN believe elections should be held in 2009 and will soon declare this publicly. Lobognon

was very critical of the Independent Electoral Commission (CEI), accusing them of mismanagement and of dragging out the identification/voter registration process longer than necessary. Lobognon told Ambassador that the threat of sanctions by the international community might convince those in Gbagbo's circle who are stalling the process to refrain from continuing to do so.

16. (C) Comment: Lobognon's description of the current state of affairs implies that the Forces Nouvelles, including the Comzones, are ready to cede responsibility for day-to-day security in the north to the ICC. Reassigning the comzones to the FAFN's headquarters and giving them responsibility for "training" the 5,000 elements destined for the new national army ensures, however, that the FAFN will have military capacity in reserve. Lobognon's assertion that the FPI is deliberately delaying implementation of Ouaga IV is plausible; PDCI and RDR contacts have made similar assertions. We found Lobognon's demeanor in this meeting particularly interesting. He seemed to be genuinely tired of the endless back and forth with the presidential camp and gave the impression that Ouaga IV was meant to give the FAFN a dignified exit strategy which is now being delayed for political gain. Lobognon's concern about the CEI, and particularly the failure to begin computerizing data captured only on paper at sites throughout the country is shared by many and is an issue we intend to raise with the CEI president. End Comment.

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